

DRAFT VISION STATEMENT
FOR A CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK
November 2008

1. Vision

- 1.1 **The Charnwood Forest Regional Park will enhance, protect, manage and promote the natural and cultural heritage features of Charnwood Forest for the benefit of those living within and visiting the Three Cities Sub-region.**

2. Background

- 2.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands includes provision for the creation of a Charnwood Forest Regional Park.
- 2.2 Charnwood Forest is seen by stakeholders, including the general public, as a naturally coherent area valued for its distinctive and special qualities in terms of its landscape beauty, biodiversity, geodiversity, historical importance and recreational role. It is also a traditional working landscape with a high proportion of land in agricultural use and, in parts of the area, mineral working. The western part of Charnwood Forest forms part of the National Forest.
- 2.3 Charnwood Forest is a major asset for people within the Three Cities Sub-region, in particular in terms of the opportunities it provides for recreation and access close to the growing urban areas of Leicester, Loughborough and Coalville.
- 2.4 However, Charnwood Forest faces challenges including habitat fragmentation and decline, landscape degradation and loss of character, meeting mineral extraction demands, pressure for the development of new recreational facilities, and growth pressures in nearby urban areas. At the same time it is recognised that sub-regional growth may provide opportunities to enhance parts of the area and improve green infrastructure (GI) links.

3. Objectives

3.1 The objectives for the proposed Charnwood Forest Regional Park have been developed in parallel with the drafting of Core Strategy planning policies by Charnwood Borough Council, North-West Leicestershire District Council, and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. The guiding principles, vision and themes within this statement will be used by each local planning authority to define the boundary of a regional park and translated into planning policies in the Local Development Framework for each area.

3.2 The objectives are :

- To retain and enhance landscape character, including biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage features.
- To retain and enhance settlement character.
- To promote sustainable leisure and tourism.

4. Boundary

4.1 The Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (October 2008) recommends a working boundary for the Regional Park, as shown on the attached Figure 019. Together with the vision and objectives this will be used by each local planning authority to define the boundary of the Regional Park and translated into planning policies in the Local Development Framework for each area. In order to maximise the potential benefits, the definition of the Park boundary needs to incorporate a degree of flexibility.

5. How we will achieve the vision

5.1 The vision will be achieved through positive spatial planning and land management within the Park as follows :

- Landscape character, biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural heritage features and settlement character will be safeguarded and enhanced, with any appropriate new development being of high quality design in keeping with its setting within the Park.
- Habitat creation and enhancement will be focussed on Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and prioritised corridors in order to maximise biodiversity benefits and achieve habitat connectivity at the landscape scale.
- The existing network of strategic green spaces and access routes within Charnwood Forest will be enhanced with new green spaces and access routes created to remedy gaps in current provision and provide for future need, to maximise access to and from the settlements surrounding Charnwood Forest, and to link to other sub-regional and local GI assets.
- The landscape character of the Park will be enhanced in line with National Forest planting targets, where appropriate, particularly where such planting can be used to assimilate development within the Park and around its fringes.
- Where development has a direct relationship with the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, it will, in terms of its scale, layout, built design, landscape treatment, access arrangements and provision of GI, reflect local landscape and settlement character and integrate with the wider Charnwood Forest Regional Park. Access by public transport, walking and cycling will be maximised.
- Sustainable leisure and tourism related development within the Charnwood Forest Regional Park will be focussed on those areas which best complement growth areas and are linked to areas of population by strategic GI networks.
- Agricultural diversification and the restoration of minerals sites to biodiversity, geodiversity, sustainable leisure and tourism

development, and woodland and rural economy uses, will be supported within the Park.

- There will be an holistic approach to the co-ordinated management and promotion of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, with the development of a distinctive Park brand, and the raising of awareness of the Park's special character and its sustainable use for both local people and visitors.

6. Summary

- 6.1 The establishment and development of a Charnwood Forest Regional Park will be a long term project. It will involve large and small scale schemes, public and private landowners, including farmers, and existing and new projects. A strategic Regional Park Plan will be required to provide the framework for the long term development of the actions proposed to achieve the vision for the Park.

